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THE CHURCH

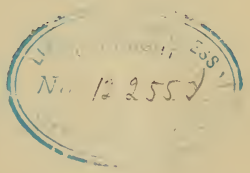
VERSUS

THE LIQUOR SYSTEM.

A SERMON

DELIVERED AT OLD ORCHARD, MAINE, AUGUST 11th, 1878.

BY
REV. D. C. BABCOCK.



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1878.

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1878.

EDWARD O. JENKINS,
PRINTER AND STEREOTYPER,
20 NORTH WILLIAM ST., N. Y.

PREFATORY.

At a large meeting held at Old Orchard
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THE CHURCH VS. THE LIQUOR SYSTEM.

The National Temperance Society has just published a sermon with the above title by the Rev. D. C. Babcock, of Philadelphia. It is a very able presentation of the relations of the Christian Church to the liquor system, which includes drinking usages and the making and vending of intoxicating liquors. It is a sermon which should have the widest possible circulation among pastors, officers, and members of churches. To the extent that it is carefully and attentively read it cannot fail to awaken and deepen intelligent and conscientious interest in the temperance cause. 12mo. 24 pages. Price ten cents each; per dozen, $1.00. Address J. N. STEARNS, Publishing Agent, 58 Reade Street New York.

The resolution was forwarded to the National Temperance Society by the following Committee, with the request for its publication, viz.: Rev. O. M. Cousens, Ex-Gov. Sidney Perham, and Professor G. E. Foster.

In accordance with this request the sermon is now published, with the hope that it may stimulate churches and members to engage more fully than ever before in the important work of discouraging the drinking usages of society and the traffic in intoxicating beverages.

THE CHURCH

VERSUS

THE LIQUOR SYSTEM.

BY REV. D. C. BABCOCK.

"*Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.*"—Prov. xxxi. 9.

KING LEMUEL was evidently blessed with a wise and good mother. In the second stanza of "The Prophecy that his Mother taught him," he is called to a proper consideration of what he is. In the third and fourth stanzas she warns him against two great vices, and in the eighth and ninth prescribes duties that arise out of his relations to his people. He is to open his mouth for them; he is to judge righteously; he is to plead the cause of the poor and needy.

The relations of the Christian Church to the "people" are more sacred than those of a king to his subjects, and the duties that grow out of these relations are clearly presented in this counsel of Lemuel's mother. The Christian Church, as an organized body, must open her

mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.

We utter a well-known and undisputed truth when we say: The Christian Church meets no obstacle to the accomplishment of her God-given mission that will at all compare with the Liquor System. It does more directly to destroy souls than all other forms of evil. It does more to waste and pervert the substance of the people, and so to prevent the evangelization of the world, than all other causes combined. All of our great benevolent enterprises are lagging because of hard times, and the Liquor System is the chief cause of hard times. Remove that and in twelve months those little words "to let" that now stare at us from the front walls of thousands of shops and dwellings would be transferred to prisons and poor-houses. It is a fact of no small significance that while shops and dwellings beg for occupants, prisons and poor-houses are more than full.

In some "statistics of crime" recently collected by Mr. F. B. Sanborn, to be presented to the International Prison Congress at Stockholm, it is shown that the convicts in our "higher prisons" are now nearly twice as numerous as they were in 1871–2. "Six years ago the aggregate in our State prisons was 16,000; now 31,000." In one or two States, he says, "the increase was

more than one hundred per cent." These prisoners cost about $43 a year above their earnings. If we add jails, "the total cost of the 60,000 persons in prison in 1877 was over $5,000,000, or more than $80 per head;" and the Liquor System makes more than two-thirds of them.

Wasteful and destructive as this Liquor System is, it is less affected by hard times than anything else. Let us prove this. The United States Government collects an annual revenue tax of $25 per capita from all the retail liquor dealers it can find. Outside of the Territories and the District of Columbia it does not say that any one may or may not sell; but if any one does sell, they tax him $25 a year on his sales. A retail liquor dealer is one "who sells or offers for sale foreign or domestic distilled spirits or wines in less quantities than five gallons at the same time." Now, for the fiscal year that closed with June, 1871, the National Government collected the sum of $3,651,484 from that class of dealers, and in 1877 they collected $3,840,469, or $188,985 more in 1877 than in 1871. Our population has increased some, while the aggregate sales of these dealers is somewhat below what it was six or eight years ago; but that the business is less affected by hard times than other trades, will be clear to all reflecting minds.

Let us educe some facts from these figures. The tax on each retail liquor dealer being $25, a division of what they all paid, in any given year, by that sum will give us the number of that class of dealers known to the Government in that year. Such division shows that there were 146,059 of them in 1871, and 153,618 in 1877, or 7,559 more in 1877 than there were in 1871. Estimate our population at 43,000,000, and divide it by the 153,618 retail liquor dealers of 1877, and you will see that we had one to 280 of our population. If you want a significant comparison, divide the population, as given above, by our 472,450 churches of 1872 and see that while we have one retail liquor dealer to every 280, we only have a church to every 593 of our population.

Dr. William Hargreaves, in "Our Wasted Resources," page 114, estimates "four customers who are drunkards" to each of the retail liquor dealers in the country. We think his estimate is not too high. Mark that! Four to each shop on an average who are "drunkards!" In the light of the divine assertion, "nor drunkards . . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God," let us multiply the 153,618 retail liquor dealers of 1877 by four and see how the Liquor System concerns the Christian Church. Let us think about the 614,472 souls under

that awful curse! Let us also remind ourselves that these persons go to untimely and dishonored graves and to the dark abodes of the lost at the rate of more than 8,000 per month in this Christian land; and that this Liquor System is turning out just such persons from its army of "moderate drinkers" at the rate of twelve times 8,000 every year! Do these things concern the Christian Church? When asked to make special assaults against a system that is so destructive as this Liquor System, are we justified in saying, "We can not leave our legitimate work to consider outside questions?"

But let us look at more "facts in figures." Dr. Edward Young, the Chief of our National Bureau of Statistics, has on several occasions made important deductions from receipts of internal revenue. He has shown that the annual cost of intoxicating beverages to consumers in our nation has not till last year fallen below $600,000,000 any year since the establishment of the Bureau in 1863. His estimate for last year (recently given) was $595,000,000; a very small reduction, for which "hard times" will account in a measure.*

* On page 43 of "Our Wasted Resources" you will find the estimate for 1870 given as $619,425,110. Page 47 gives the amount for 1871 at $680,036,042; and on page 48 the sum for 1872 is given as $735,720,048.

Now, if we divide the $600,000,000 spent annually for these beverages by the 153,618 retail liquor dealers of 1877, we shall see that they have taken an average of nearly $4,000 for goods that we had better pay for and not use, than to drink if we could have them without cost. But let us notice that this truth involves another, viz., it would be better and cheaper, purely as a matter of business, for us to tax ourselves as a nation $600,000,000 a year and give our retail liquor dealers $4,000 each, than to permit them to acquire it by a traffic that involves such waste of material and production of evil as theirs. Honest industry is taxed far beyond that sum to take care of the results of this traffic; and its effect on the cost of living and in depressing legitimate trade is very great.

We have but a vague conception of what this vast sum would do. Let us suppose 600,000 of our drunkards to be heads of families, and that we give each of them $200 from this drink-money—now worse than wasted—for house rent. That would take but $120,000,000. Then give each of them $500 more to live on, or $300,000,000. You still have $180,000,000 unexpended with which to pay even heavier taxes than are now paid by all branches of the liquor trade.

The total valuation of all the church property

in the United States in 1872 was $354,483,581, or about seven-twelfths of $600,000,000. We swallow that down in poisonous fluids every seven months, and then puzzle our muddled brains over the causes of hard times. May I suggest to you, intelligent people, that any scheme of labor reform or financial relief that ignores the Liquor System is too worthless to engage the attention of sensible people. The labor problem is not difficult to solve. Poverty in a land of such resources as ours is a disgrace to us, because it is mainly the result of drinking.

Let me give one more comparison. New Jersey in 1870 had a population of 906,096. Maine had 626,000. Divide the revenue tax paid by each State—viz., $21,098 in Maine and $141,237 in New Jersey—and you will see that there were in New Jersey 5,649 retail liquor dealers known to the Government and only 843 in Maine. The traffic is illegal in Maine. In New Jersey it is protected by law; hence the difference. But I have said enough to convince any one that the Liquor System is an enormous evil, and that it is against the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. I do not present these facts and their lessons to discourage any one, but in the hope that they will arouse us to inquiry and effort.

And now let us give ourselves to the inquiry

—What ought we to do? By "we" I mean the Christian Church. The question is practical; let the answer be practical. The Liquor System, as a whole and in all its parts, is against the Church. The Church must be against the Liquor System as a whole and in all its parts. We must destroy that system—it belongs to the "works of the Devil."

Let us try to see what is involved in this Liquor System. In general terms, but two things: the drinking customs of society and the traffic that supports and perpetuates those customs. The drinking customs rest, to a large extent, on false views of the drink. The traffic rests solely on the fact that it is profitable. The false views about the drink must be corrected. The profits of the trade must be destroyed.

The general movement against this Liquor System rests on two plain principles, one applying to the use and the other to the sale of intoxicating beverages. Those principles are known as abstinence and prohibition. They both rest on the now well-established fact that all alcoholic liquors are poisons; and because they are poisons, it is morally wrong to use them as beverages, or to furnish them for such use. The Earl of Shaftesbury said, years ago, "What is morally wrong can not be politically

right," so any support of this immoral trade by political action or non-action is a grave offense against God and humanity.

For lack of clear and comprehensive views of the Liquor System and of the movement against it, some people say very absurd things.

One says, "I don't believe in law. Get people to stop drinking, and the sale will stop; you can't legislate men into habits of sobriety;" and so he cries out against all attempts to suppress the traffic as an abuse of "good men," and does not see far enough to know that he talks foolishly, and that only fools and rum-sellers applaud his utterances. Another, equally narrow, says, "What is the use of talking total abstinence? As long as the stuff is made it will be drank. The way to stop drinking is to go to headquarters and stop the manufacture." Both of these men have some truth, but the first fails to see that the grog-sellers are manufacturing drunkards faster than we can "reform" them, and does not say enough about form-ation to lead one to suppose he ever thought of it as legitimate "Christian temperance work;" while the other is too obtuse to understand that the only way to "headquarters" is through such an enlightened public sentiment and awakened conscience on the whole question, as will place men with right views and right principles

at "headquarters." I repeat it, we must be against the entire Liquor System! We must destroy it, root and branch!

But this system involves more than is seen in any general statement. It involves the manufacture, the importation, the sale, and the use of all classes of intoxicating liquors as beverages. It involves the bad governmental practice of raising revenue from causes of vice and immorality. It involves the licensing of what is morally wrong, and the signing of applications for such license. It involves the letting of buildings for liquor stores, and the raising of hops and grain for the liquor trade. A beer-seller sharply retorted to a hop-raiser who was berating her for her business: "You sell it by the pound and I sell it by the quart. What is the difference?"

Let us ask, also, if this system does not involve the use of "the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright," as an element in the Lord's Supper? Can it be that our Lord consecrated that which He inspired Solomon to denounce as "a mocker and raging;" as that which "biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder;" can it be, I ask, that our Lord consecrated that to be used as an emblem of His shed blood? When we reflect on what is involved in such a view, we

shall reject it, and use not the fruit of putrefaction, but "the fruit of the vine."

We have said enough to convince any one that the Liquor System is very comprehensive. There are few interests, temporal or eternal, that escape its blighting influences. It not only creeps into our pews, but into our altars. It even comes up into our pulpits and drags down those consecrated to the most sacred duties. It goes into General Conferences and General Assemblies, and sometimes suppresses utterance and action on this great practical question.

We have a great trust committed to us. If we serve our "own generation, by the will of God," we must assault this Liquor System. It is the dominant evil of our time. The temperance question, instead of being worn out, is just opening to us. We are just getting up where we can see what it involves; to such an understanding of its principles and of their correctness and importance as leads to serious thought and earnest inquiry as to how they may be got into general practice.

What are the ways and means? We have now come to this question, and I thank God that we have. How can total abstinence and prohibition be made effective? This is not a question of principles, but of methods. Let me say first, that we shall not secure this end, the

destruction of the Liquor System, by a temperance spasm now and then, nor by ranting against rum-sellers and legislators. The State is the great rum-seller, and we, the people, are the State.

We shall not overthrow this system by singing and praying alone. We do not need less of either, but we do need to mix in with our songs and prayers more of right teaching and earnest work for the prevention of the evils of this system.

The temperance question is a general question. It concerns the whole nation and all classes. We ought to recognize this fact, and to see what it involves. Our plans and efforts ought to accord with it. The whole country is to be educated into the acceptance and practice of what is right.

In this work of education our main reliance must be on the Christian Church. Christian men and women are now, as they always have been, the most efficient temperance workers. Few besides them have interest enough in the cause to work for it. The Church has the only means and appliances that can meet the case everywhere. Other organizations can do much, but they are not to be found everywhere as is the Church. They also lack the facilities for reaching the people that the Church has.

They can reach but few, and that at great expense and disadvantage. They lack skilled and disciplined leaders, and hence can not do as effective work as they themselves desire. A few, and they are mainly church-members, now provide the meagre support the movement has, and even that little can not be expended as wisely as it ought to be. But the Church has the pulpit, the Sunday-school, the prayer-meeting, and, to a large extent, the press. Every part of this work is in her line. It involves no departure whatever from legitimate church work. It costs no more to preach a temperance sermon, or hold a temperance prayer-meeting, or teach a temperance lesson, or hold a temperance concert in the Sunday-school, than to present other topics. We complain of poor work outside of the Church, but do we give that best of all criticism, "a more excellent way?"

The Church ought to lead on this question. She should get right herself on the whole question, and then teach others; and she can teach what she does know while investigation goes on. No small part of our work is that sort of teaching that has first to correct errors and remove prejudices. It is more delicate than difficult. There is no practical question before us about which people assume to know so much. Everybody has this question settled and can tell

the world just what to do and how to do it! Even cultured teachers, who are modest in their utterances on other questions, abound in opinions on this question that do not rest on previous careful examination, and rush into print with crude and careless utterances that would evoke severe censure if given on other subjects. Public sentiment is yet to be formed on this question. We had men in the past generation who understood it, but the present generation has not been educated in this direction.

By what methods shall we secure this correct public sentiment? I answer, by just such methods as are effective on other questions It will take time; not less than a generation. As churches, we have no methods of temperance work. Some local churches have methods of work, and many church members are active workers for the cause; but not one of the great evangelical denominations has any plan for promoting temperance.

We need some plan of operations. How shall we get it? How do we carry on mission, tract, Bible, and church-extension work? Are those wise methods? Then, why not promote temperance in the same way? Why not place the National Temperance Society and Publication House in the same relation to the Church

as we do the American Bible Society? It is not a denominational movement, and all would sustain it. We shall, I fear, have no well-trained generation until we adopt some such plan.

We can not afford, as churches, to ignore this cause, and surely the plan that involves systematic action will generate the greatest amount of force and give it the wisest and most effective expenditure. There are men—some of them ministers—who cry out against these benevolent causes, but they are out of their place. The Church of God is not an employment bureau; it is God's agency for the salvation of this world. To refuse to work any cause He thrusts upon us is to refuse to do our duty. God lays this work at our door. Broad-minded and large-hearted men and women, who want to do all the good they can while passing through this world, will gladly give it a place in their hearts and in their plans of benevolence.

Respect for economy dictates this course. Christian men now support this cause so far as it has support, but even the little they give had better come from the many and be wisely expended than to be expended on men who are in temperance work mainly to get a living.

If our 72,450 churches had but one temperance sermon a year, and would devote an average of three dollars to this cause, that would give a fund of more than $217,000, or nearly four times as much as the National Temperance Society now receives from sales and donations combined; and we would have more real education than results from our present course.

With a word of exhortation, I will close. First, to pastors: If these views impress you as sound, help to give them a voice. Go forth to put them in practice. You can anticipate any plan that the Church in her general councils may devise. You can present the claims of this cause and enlist your people in its behalf. You can secure and use some of the excellent literature that the National Temperance Society has on its shelves, and thus aid in educating the people. But I want to appeal to the membership of the Church, and especially to young people.

You are living in a grand and noble time. There never was a better opportunity to strike effective blows for God and humanity than the present. Will you not consecrate yourselves to this glorious work? Present yourselves living sacrifices! God calls for living sacrifices! What He asks "is your reasonable service,"

and in the performance of it you will find great reward.

"Oh, come! oh, come! and bravely stand the field,
While you have strength the Temp'rance sword to wield:
Ere long the foe shall be compelled to fly,
And shouts of victory will ascend on high."

For Sunday-School Libraries.

THE National Temperance Society and Publication House have published Eighty-seven Books specially adapted to Sunday-school Libraries, which have been carefully examined and approved by a Publication Committee of Twelve, representing the various Religious denominations, and they have been highly recommended by numerous Ecclesiastical bodies and Temperance Organizations all over the land. They should be in every Sunday-school Library. The following is the List, any of which can be ordered through any bookseller, or direct from the rooms of the Society, 58 Reade Street, New York.

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The following valuable books, by some of the foremost writers in the world, have been published by the National Temperance Society, and which should have a wide circulation:

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This book presents in a new and striking light the economic aspect of the temperance question. It includes a series of fourteen elaborate and carefully prepared tables, the result of many months of painstaking labor, which give from official sources an exhibit of our immense agricultural, manufacturing, and mining resources; the yield of our fisheries; the extent, value, and receipts of our railways; the growth of our exports and imports during the last fifty years; the number of persons employed and the wages paid in connection with our varied industries, etc. The book also presents, in a more complete form than they have ever before been given to the public, well-authenticated statistics of the liquor traffic, showing the quantity and cost of intoxicating drinks; the number of persons employed in the manufacture and sale of liquors; the expenditures for crime and pauperism caused by the drink-traffic, and the material benefit which would accrue, especially to the laboring classes, to the cause of education and religion, and the ease with which our national debt could be paid, if the great drink-waste were stopped.

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